

THE MANNER  
OF THE  
RESURRECTION

Leslie D. WEATHERHEAD

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The resurrection of Christ

THE MANNER  
OF THE  
RESURRECTION

in the Light of Modern  
Science and Psychical Research

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THE MANNER OF THE RESURRECTION

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“The undiscover’d country from whose bourn  
No traveller returns, puzzles the will.”

SHAKESPEARE, *Hamlet*, Act 3, Scene 1

“I venture now upon a bold saying ; for I predict that, in consequence of the new evidence” (i.e. the psychical) “all reasonable men, a century hence, will believe the Resurrection of Christ, whereas, in default of the new evidence, no reasonable men, a century hence, would have believed it.”

F. W. H. MYERS, “Human Personality and  
its Survival of Bodily Death” (1903)

“I am convinced that the man who will not believe in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is far more credulous than the man who does believe it.”

VISCOUNT CALDECOTE, Lord Chief Justice  
of England 1940-49

“The longer I live the more obvious it is to me that the most sacred act of a man’s life is to say and feel, ‘I believe such and such to be true’.”

T. H. HUXLEY  
(Letter to Charles Kingsley on the death  
of Huxley’s little son of four years of age.)

## INTRODUCTION

IN offering this essay on the Resurrection, I am well aware that it will awaken opposition from some quarters.

There are many devout Christians who think it is impious to ask questions about such matters. If one both asks and tries to answer such questions, one is accused of "not believing in miracles," or of trying to "explain them away."

I do believe in miracles as defined on p. 26 and I believe that they constantly happen. I have seen miracles happen in people's lives which are as amazing as those recounted in the New Testament. The miracle of conversion, for instance, is in such a category. When a drunken brute, living in a comfortless slum furnished only with sugar-boxes, becomes, after one Sunday night service, a temperate, steady-going, reliable citizen—and I have seen this happen—one has a real miracle on one's hands. "Whether Christ turned water into wine," said one such convert, "I do not know, but

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in my case He did a much more useful thing, He turned beer into furniture.”

Yes, a much more useful thing than to do what only one Gospel records, to supply magically a hundred-and-twenty gallons of wine which would surely rather encourage a debauch than manifest the glory of the Son of Man.<sup>1</sup>

Surely He Who told us that the greatest commandment of all was to love the Lord our God with all our *minds*, wants us to ask questions, and respects our intellectual integrity.

### *Misnamed Faith*

Part of the trouble in the Church today is that young people who do come in are expected to “believe” a lot of difficult propositions without any evidence, by switching on something miscalled “faith.” Faith is not something to be turned on like the turning of a tap.

We must point out that faith is utter loyalty to the trend of all the available

<sup>1</sup> See John ii, 1-11. I have discussed the miracle fully in “It Happened in Palestine,” p. 43 ff.

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evidence, and then a leap towards the unprovable prompted by insight.

What we must exclude, and expose in all its naked puerility, is "faith," so called, which is not faith, but a spurious and cheap substitute ; "faith" which is a bastard credulity and superstition with no dignity in it and no foundation in knowledge ; "faith" which is thought pious and devotional and praiseworthy, based on what the devotee thinks God ought to do, but which never thinks things through, never asks what in effect He does do, and what are the laws by which He works ; "faith" like the feeling engendered by the medicine men in the dark jungle villages in Africa, evoked by muttering words which have no meaning and producing emotional states out of man's proneness to fear the unknown—especially the spiritually unknown.

No one can see with indifference the young people of our generation, living as they do in the scientific atmosphere of our schools and colleges five or six days a week, and then on Sundays expected to go to church

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and feel at home in an atmosphere in which immense statements are made, with the backing only of hoary tradition ; in which words are used which say one thing and mean another ; in which belief is demanded through "faith," presumably because no reasons can be given for it ; in which passages are read, without explanation, from the Old Testament, which deny both reason and morality ; in which miracles are related which puzzle the youth who—without knowing it—loves God with his mind and seeks to maintain the integrity of the mental processes God has given him, and which are never violated by the university as they are by the Church. Religion has lost the leadership she once had partly because she will not abandon what is untrue and restate her findings, as her quest for truth progresses. Scientists have much to teach us here. They do not prefer tradition to truth. They give up the most dearly held hypothesis once it is shown to be untrue. They do not say one thing and mean another or fear to follow where truth leads.



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No one can watch the youth of today turn away from the Church without longing to revise our services, interpret our faith in modern times, assure them that Christ and all that is essential to His message can stand up, without fear, to the most searching scrutiny of science, and that the truest minds in the Church welcome every discovery and treatment of science, and only beg the scientists to go further and release the energies, not only of the material world, but to invade, with their careful method, as far as they possibly can, the realm of the mind and the spirit.<sup>1</sup>

### *Psychic Research*

But when we begin to talk of enquiry into the field of psychic research, we meet a more stubborn resistance.

Many people will not listen to any talk of spiritual presences. They put all thoughts of ghosts, spooks, spirit-rappings, vanishings,

<sup>1</sup> I have quoted here from an earlier book, "Psychology, Religion and Healing," p. 445-6.

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and so on, into a parcel and throw it, so to speak, down the cellar steps into final darkness lest the very thought of what is in the parcel should make them gnash their teeth in terror or share the obloquy of the investigators who are thought to be a bit "queer." "Wise men, let alone good Christian men," they say, "don't have anything to do with such superstitious nonsense." It is all one to them with witches on broomsticks, clanking chains and phantom stage-coaches, hair-raising ghost stories, midnight scenes in eerie churchyards and so on. Ask them about "Spiritualism" and their hackles rise at the very word, and they tell you about horns that play with no lips applied to them, objects hurled about a room, mediumistic utterances that seem just silly and that, anyway, can all—they tell themselves—be explained by "telepathy."

### *Cranks*

Let it be granted that psychic research has had a chequered history and has often been

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bedevilled by cranks, fools, cheats and charlatans ; by well-intentioned people who are easily duped, and by simple folk who turn a chance remark into a message from the dead, and telepathic communication into a directive from another world.

Yet the history of the Christian Church is not clear of all this and not in the distant past alone. I have yet to meet the minister of a large church who has not got in his congregation the typical crank. This man believes that Christ may return tomorrow from a heaven in the sky—presumably in Eastern robes, since a blue suit and bowler hat would not fit the preconceived picture—and take the righteous—namely all those who think like the crank—to eternal bliss, consigning the remainder to an ever-blazing hell. Another man believes that every word of the Bible is verbally inspired, though he does not explain which words are so inspired—Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic (the language Jesus spoke), King James' Version in English, the Revised Version, or Revised Standard Version, Dr. Moffatt or Mr. J. B.

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Phillips ! One crank asks me if I am "saved" and another whether I have been "washed in the blood."

So it is in "Spiritualism." Many thoughtful, worthwhile people turn from it in revolt and disgust, just as many other thoughtful people turn from some branches of the Church, with their archaisms, untenable doctrines, dull services, feeble homilies, sentimental and insincere hymns and—when one thinks of the gossip and malice, the petty spite and jealousy—a quality of fellowship which would never be descended to in a regiment or a golf club.

Yet we must turn back to "Spiritualism," or rather to the whole field of psychic research, and extract the wheat from the chaff, the true from the false, the real "findings" from the froth.<sup>1</sup> For in the country vaguely called "Psychical Research," lie discoveries which man desperately needs in his quest of reality. His poverty cries out for the riches

<sup>1</sup> Scientists are to be welcomed who are doing this, like Dr. Raynor Johnson in his three great books, "The Imprisoned Splendour," "Nurslings of Immortality" and "Watcher on the Hills" (Hodder & Stoughton).

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which are at present hidden in the mental and spiritual parts of the universe. The secrets of the physical universe have yielded to brave and persistent enquiry in a wonderful way in the last fifty years and the world has been enriched by the findings of material science. I believe that bright sun is setting. When the sun shines brightly, men cannot see the stars. Men have been dazzled by the bright light of material science in the last fifty years, and no wonder. Fifty years ago there were few telephones and motor cars, no aeroplanes or wireless or television or radar, and the atom was defined as "the smallest conceivable part of an element." Now it is a universe in itself, and man's knowledge of, and power over, Nature threatens his own destruction!

But man is spirit, not matter, and as the sun of physical science sets, stars will appear which govern his destiny far more importantly. And some of these stars are suns. By their light man may free himself from imprisonment in the material and find the delights and energies of the non-material

part of God's universe. The same persistence and the same spirit shown by researchers into the material must be applied to the mental and spiritual phenomena which have hitherto been regarded as not quite respectable and the mental possession only of the simple and the credulous.

### *The Psychical in the Gospels*

The Gospel story—I was going to say “*invites*” us to psychic enquiry. In truth, it forces us to ask questions.

What do those who banish all psychic phenomena from enquiry make of the following :

“There appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with Him.” (They had been dead hundreds of years).—Matthew xvii, 3 ; Mark ix, 4 ; Luke ix, 30.

“He vanished out of their sight.”—Luke xxiv, 31.

“He was manifested unto the eleven as they sat at meat” (after His death).—Mark xvi, 14.

“He stood in the midst” (after His death)

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“and saith unto them, ‘Peace be unto you.’ But they were terrified and affrighted and supposed that they beheld a spirit. . . .”—Luke xxiv, 36 ff. cf. also John xx, 19 ff.

All these “appearances” *push* us into the province of psychical research.

### *John Wesley and Psychical Research*

It is refreshing to find that John Wesley was not afraid of this strange country. After all, there can be little doubt that his boyhood's home, Epworth Rectory, was a haunted house. The ghost was even given a name and called “Jeffrey.” All readers of his father's letters and his own biography are familiar with the stories of poltergeist phenomena told about the home where Samuel Wesley and his wife Susannah brought up John and Charles, Emily, Hetty and the rest, in the early years of the eighteenth century.

The Rev. E. W. Sprague, after much research, found in the Congressional Library in Washington D.C., U.S.A., the works of

Wesley published in 1808. From Vol. IV (pages 279-86) he quotes as follows :

“Wednesday, 25, and the following days, being at Sunderland, I received from one who had feared God from her infancy, one of the strangest accounts I ever read ; and yet I can find no pretense to disbelieve it. The well known character of the person excludes all suspicion of fraud ; and the nature of the circumstances themselves excludes the possibility of a delusion. It is true that there are several of them which I do not comprehend, but this is with me, a very slender objection ; for what is it which I do comprehend, even of the things I see daily ? Truly not the smallest grain of sand, or spire of grass. I know not how the one grows, or how the particles of the other cohere together. What pretense have I then to deny well-attested facts because I cannot comprehend them ?

“It is true likewise, that the English in general, and indeed most of the men of learning in Europe, have given up all accounts of witches and apparitions, as mere old wives’ fables. I am sorry for it ; and I willingly take this opportunity of entering my solemn protest against this violent compliment which so many that believe the Bible pay to those who do not believe it. I owe them no such service. These are at the



bottom of the outcry which has been raised, and with such insolence spread throughout the nation, in direct opposition not only to the Bible, but to the suffrage of the wisest and best of men in all ages and nations. They well know [whether Christians know it or not] that the giving up of witchcraft is, in effect, giving up the Bible ; and they know, on the other hand, that if but one account of the intercourse of men with separate spirits be admitted, their whole castle in the air (Deism, Atheism, Materialism) falls to the ground. I know no reason, therefore, why we should suffer even this weapon to be wrested out of our hands. Indeed, there are numerous arguments besides, which abundantly confute their vain imaginations. But we need not be hooted out of one ; neither reason nor religion require this.

“ I proceed to as remarkable a narrative as any that has fallen under my notice. The reader may believe it if he pleases, or may disbelieve it, without any offense to me. Meantime let him not be offended if I believe it, till I see better reasons to the contrary.

“ Elizabeth Hobson was born in Sunderland in the year 1744. Her father dying when she was three or four years old, her uncle, Thomas Rea, a pious man, brought her up as his own daughter. She was serious from a child, and grew up in the

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fear of God. Yet she had deep and sharp convictions of sin, till she was about sixteen years of age, when she found peace with God, and from that time the whole tenor of her behaviour was suitable to her profession.

“On Wednesday, May 25, 1768, and the three following days, I talked with her at large ; but it was with great difficulty I prevailed on her to speak. The substance of what she said was as follows :

“ ‘ A little before Michaelmas, 1763, my brother George, who was a good young man, went to sea. The day after Michaelmas-day, about midnight, I saw him standing, by my bedside, surrounded with a glorious light, and looking earnestly at me. He was wet all over. That night the ship in which he sailed split upon a rock and all the crew were drowned.

“ ‘ On April 9, 1767, about midnight, I was lying awake, and I saw my brother John standing by my bedside. Just at that time he died in Jamaica.

“ ‘ By his death I became entitled to a house in Sunderland, which was left us by my grandfather, John Hobson.’

“So, a spirit finds no difficulty in travelling three or four thousand miles in a moment.

“I know that those who fashionably deny the existence of spirits are hugely disgusted at ac-

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counts of this kind. I know that they incessantly labour to spread this disgust among those that are of a better mind ; because if one of these accounts be admitted, their whole system falls to the ground. But whoever is pleased or displeased, I must testify what I believe to be the truth."<sup>1</sup>

Of course, such accounts are common in the Proceedings and Journal of the Society for Psychic Research, but it is interesting to have John Wesley's support of their veracity, interest and relevance.

We must not be too proud to remember that truth often enters through lowly doors. We must " sit down before facts " with the humility of a little child. However we may have been " put off " by Spiritualism, or by garbled accounts of it in drama, in scornful essays, or in the Press, we must remember that psychic happenings do take place. Poltergeist noises do take place. Ghosts are seen. Messages have reached men which

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by permission from " News of the Invisible World from the Pen of John Wesley." Compiled and published by Rev. E. W. Sprague, 1928.

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cannot be satisfactorily explained on any hypothesis save that which regards them as coming from the dead, and, whatever their explanation, they are factual. Men worthy of the name of "scientists" must be ready to explore phenomena that stem from non-physical causes. I prophesy that a careful and honest enquiry into psychic phenomena will yield even richer treasures for the well-being of man than physics, chemistry and biology have given us, vast though those treasures are. And we may find two very interesting results: materialism may be undermined and seen to be quite inadequate as a basis for understanding the universe, for *the universe does not end where the senses cease to register its phenomena*, and secondly, we may rejoice in the honest recording by the Gospel writers of events they could not possibly have understood, and we may find that the fact that they did not distort events, or try to make them fit into first-century categories, but described simply and honestly what they and others saw and heard, has left us with a record which further under-

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standing and insight will increasingly illumine.

Thus the Resurrection, which materialistic science tends to reject, may be seen to fit into categories we are only at the beginning of understanding, and those who, on the basis of the old science, would reject it out of hand, may, as the new science of Psychic Research extends, find belief in it not only possible, but compelling, and be led to find not only that the Lord of Life was once released from the imprisoning hand of Death, but that the Resurrection has happened again within them ; for He Who was imprisoned in old ideas which for modern scientists killed Him and kept Him among the dead, is released by the bursting of a tomb in their own minds, and is alive, clothed in new thought-forms, to greet them in a new dawn of understanding and to make that claim upon them which has ever been characteristic of Him throughout the ages.

# The Resurrection of Christ in the Light of Modern Science and Psychical Research

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## *A Great Question*

Some years ago a number of distinguished people were asked by a famous newspaper what question above all others they would ask, if they could ask but one and be certain of a true answer. One questioner wrote, "I would like to ask Jesus Christ, 'Did You really rise from the dead?'" For myself, I am convinced of the *fact* of the Resurrection, but I should dearly like to have a completely satisfying answer to the question "How?"

## *Miracle*

It may be, of course, that mere man will never know the answer to the question, "How did Christ rise from the dead?"

The Resurrection may be a miracle in the sense in which I define miracle. My definition is as follows : " A miracle is a law-abiding event by which God accomplishes His purposes through the release of energies which are normal on a plane of being higher than any with which we are familiar." If only beings on some higher plane can know about and release these energies ; if man, because he is man, has normally no entry yet into that plane, it may be that he cannot find yet the answer to the question, " How did Christ rise from the dead ? "

This idea of miracle demands a word or two of explanation. Some think of miracles only in terms of wonder. For them the marvellous is the miraculous. This seems unsound to me, for many marvellous things of a hundred years ago are now understood. With such a definition they cease to be miraculous. I well remember an Arab sheik who would have bet me a large sum that no message could reach Baghdad from Basra faster than his best horse could run. He had not heard of the electric telegraph,

let alone the wireless. It was an apparent "miracle" to him, but not to me, and after a period of time not to him either.

Some writers define miracle as the intervention of God in the action of the laws of the universe. This seems to me like accusing God of incompetence, as though He said at certain points, "I never anticipated this when I laid down the laws which govern the world. Now I must intervene and alter things to achieve My ends." Can situations ever arise in which the laws of God are inadequate? "All's love, yet all's law," sings Browning. All may be law, but some laws may belong to a higher plane of being.

We can never assert that miracle is a breach of law unless we know all the laws there are in every part of the universe—material, psychical and spiritual. And who knows these save God? Further, the God I believe in is not the Victim of His own laws, or hampered by what He Himself created. Without rupture of law He must be free to carry out His holy purposes. His laws are not rigid like a steel gauntlet—to



use a simile of Professor Cairns—but pliable like a silk glove. To this could be added a wise word of St. Augustine : “ We say that all (miracles) are contrary to Nature, but this is not so. For how is that contrary to Nature which happens by the will of God, since the will of so mighty a Creator is certainly the nature of each created thing ? ”<sup>1</sup>

This talk about a “ higher plane ” demands explanation. Perhaps an illustration will make the point clear. Let us imagine two ignorant savages discussing together the injuries which one of them has received. We can imagine that the wounded one is asking the advice of the other. The advice would probably be that the patient should bind up his wounds, lie up for a day or two and let Nature do her healing work. Unless sepsis set in, the patient would probably recover. But supposing, at the request of the injured man, a highly trained modern surgeon broke into the situation from his superior level of understanding,

<sup>1</sup> “ The City of God,” Book 21, Ch. 8.

and with his modern scientific equipment and his up-to-date knowledge of remedies. Supposing, without necessarily understanding how his treatment worked, he used modern aids to recovery chosen with care based on insight into the nature of the injuries. Then the patient would recover in a very short time, and, from the savages' point of view, the result would be a miracle, the breaking through of law-abiding energies, familiar on the higher plane of the surgeon's culture, but quite inexplicable on the lower plane of the savages' intelligence.<sup>1</sup>

### *The Resurrection within the Realm of Law*

It may be that the Resurrection of Christ exhibits energies which are law-abiding, but as far beyond our understanding and use as penicillin injections are to a savage in a jungle village. Maybe we shall arrive on this plane one day. Maybe on that plane the phenomena of the Resurrection are normal.

<sup>1</sup> I have repeated here an illustration I used in "Psychology, Religion and Healing," p. 38-9.

“ Maybe,” as Professor Henry Drummond once said, “ it is as normal for a sinless man to rise from the dead, as it is for a sinful man to remain in the grave.”<sup>1</sup> What if perfect nearness to the great Author and Sustainer of all, should give a man power over all the tragic forces of nature and time ? ”<sup>1</sup> Our limitations are not Christ’s, and though one day we may emerge from them, no human being save Christ has fully done so yet.

If this is so, it may be that we must leave the Resurrection as inexplicable, as miraculous in the sense quoted above, and that to ask “ how ” is to ask a question which can no more be intelligently answered than the question a savage might ask a modern physician as to why and how penicillin *works*.

At the same time, loving God with our minds, as we are commanded to do in what Christ called the first commandment of all, involves asking questions and peering as far as we may into what is at once the most im-

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from Professor David Cairns, “ The Reasonableness of the Christian Faith,” p. 153 (Hodder & Stoughton).

portant event in history, the most important foundation stone in the Christian faith, and the most baffling problem in religion which confronts the questing mind.

### *Alternatives to Belief*

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is so difficult for the modern mind that some thinkers have cut the Gordian knot by denying that it happened at all. They have made one or more of the following suggestions :

- (1) That Joseph of Arimathea, who owned the garden which contained the tomb and who asked for Christ's body, put it in another grave, or afterwards removed it elsewhere and kept its resting place a secret.
- (2) That Romans removed it and would not disclose where they had put it.
- (3) That Jews, hostile to the Christians, moved it to avoid veneration of the tomb on the part of Christ's followers.

- (4) That Jews, friendly to the followers of Christ, concealed it to prevent the Romans taking it away, and throwing it on to the burning rubbish heaps on which the bodies of crucified criminals were normally thrown.
- (5) That the women went to the wrong tomb, and finding it empty, imagined that Jesus had risen.
- (6) That Jesus did not really die, but swooned on the Cross, was taken down from it, and in the coolness of the tomb recovered and made His way out.

*Did Jesus Swoon?*

We must examine these positions and since the last is in a category by itself, let us take it first and get it out of the way. Strangely enough, it was held by men of the mental calibre of Paulus, Schleiermacher, Renan and Venturini. I say "strangely" because such a theory involves a charge of deceit against Christ's earliest disciples who preached His "resurrection from the *dead*."

Further, it asks more of credulity than orthodoxy asks of faith. How could a person who had been scourged, tortured, nailed to a cross through the hot hours of a whole day, and into whose side a spear had been thrust, drawing not only blood but the water-like serum in the pericardial sac—itsself a proof of death—get off a stone slab in the dark, remove His own tightly wound wrappings or bandages, push back from the mouth of the cave-tomb a heavy grindstone shaped boulder like a solid stone wheel, which it took several strong men to move, evade the guards, procure from some unexplained source some clothing, and then appear to His friends not as an invalid needing weeks of nursing back to health, but as a triumphant conqueror over death who could on the same day walk seven miles to Emmaus with two disciples, have supper with them, and then travel another seven miles to Jerusalem in time to have supper with the rest of His friends? This is desperate scepticism indeed and can safely be discarded.

*Alternatives Disposed of*

In his valuable—and indeed thrilling—book called “Who Moved the Stone?” Mr. Frank Morison examines the other five possibilities most adequately and disposes of them completely. In passing I would recommend this book. It is splendidly written and is as exciting as a thriller.

But without trespassing too much in Mr. Morison’s field or stealing his splendid thunder, one may dispose of the remaining possibilities by two considerations :

(1) If any enemies of infant Christianity, Roman or Jewish, had removed the body, or knew where it was, they had only to exhibit it or indicate its whereabouts in order to deal a crushing blow to that infant faith, from which it would never have recovered.

(2) If friendly hands, Joseph’s or another’s, had moved the body—so that, for instance, the women found the grave empty—the body must have been buried *somewhere*. The tomb would have been venerated as Lenin’s was. Further, how



could the apostles honestly preach the "resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" within seven weeks of His death, if the whereabouts of the body were known?

Those who love detective and "Who Dunit?" stories will agree that it is not so easy to dispose of a body. Many will agree that it is not easy to keep a secret. To suppose that if the body lay in some hidden place, that either friends or enemies could maintain silence and secrecy while the apostles preached the Resurrection of Christ from the dead in the very neighbourhood in which the events happened, and indeed in the very presence of those who knew differently, without one murmur of the truth emerging, is to suppose the impossible. To suppose that this world-religion had its origin in a lie, and that men, formerly cowards and runaways, suddenly decided to preach a message which they knew to be a lie and to do so when it cost them their lives, is to resort to an impossible scepticism and this too we may discard.



*The Narrative*

Let us now recall the narrative because certain things written there, at first sight trivial, do, to my mind, carry most important weight as evidence. I know, of course, that modern scholars do not view the fourth gospel as they view the earliest, St. Mark, or indeed St. Matthew and St. Luke. They tell us that St. John's gospel, written about A.D. 100, is rather the reverent meditation of a mystic about what Christ said and did, than the kind of almost verbatim report which a conscientious and accurate trained reporter would give us today.

Actually all four Gospels differ in unimportant details just as four honest accounts of a battle would differ. In one famous battle in the first world war, certain events were ascribed to "the angels at Mons." Others wrote saying nothing of angels. So here, regarding the Resurrection, Matthew speaks of an angel, John of two angels, Luke of two men ; Mark, the earliest writer, of one man. Since Mark is the earliest writer

(A.D. 65), we may rely most on his account, and I have come to believe that he himself was the young man in the tomb on Easter morning. There are discrepancies in the lists of women present and in the way the stone was rolled away. If all four accounts agreed in every detail, it would point rather to collusion than honest freedom. All agree on the fact of the Resurrection. Similarly, Livy and Polybus, the two chief historians of the crossing of the Alps by Hannibal, give completely irreconcilable accounts. But no one doubts that Hannibal crossed the Alps.

I am going to refer now to the account of the Resurrection in the fourth Gospel because its very emphasis on what superficially are unimportant details, declares to me that the narrative is autoptic. In other words, *it is the narrative itself, or taken from the narrative, of one who was there*, and who writes about what he saw. As these words fall on your eye or ear, please pay special attention to the description of the grave clothes, how and where they were lying.



“Now on the first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, while it was yet dark, unto the tomb, and seeth the stone taken away from the tomb. She runneth therefore, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, ‘They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid Him.’ Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb. And they ran both together : and the other disciple outran Peter, and came first to the tomb ; and stooping and looking in, he seeth the linen cloths lying ; yet entered he not in. Simon Peter therefore also cometh, following him, and entered into the tomb ; and he beholdeth the linen cloths lying, and the napkin, that was upon His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself. Then entered in therefore the other disciple also, which came first to the tomb, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. So the disciples went away again into their own home.

“But Mary was standing without at the tomb weeping : so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb ; and she beholdeth two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say

unto her, 'Woman, why weepest thou?' She saith unto them, 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.' When she had thus said, she turned herself back, and beholdeth Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, 'Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?' She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him, 'Sir, if thou hast borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.' Jesus saith unto her 'Mary!' She turneth herself, and saith unto Him in Hebrew, 'Rabboni'; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith to her, 'Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father; but go unto My brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.' Mary Magdalene cometh and telleth the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and how that He had said these things unto her.

"When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, 'Peace be unto you.' And when He had said this, He shewed unto them His hands and His side. The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John xx, 1-20.

Now note, in the words in italics, the strange importance given to the way the linen cloths were lying, and "*the napkin*" or turban "*that was upon His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself,*" and presumably lying like a turban on its side.

St. Luke was a doctor. He was interested in symptoms, in small things that point to important things. He says that the report of the women sounded like "idle talk" (Luke xxiv, 11) and he uses there a medical word—*leros*—which we incorporate in our word "delirium." The talk of the women sounded like the ravings of a person in delirium, he tells us. So they disbelieved the women (Verse 11). There is no wishful thinking here! And then what? "Peter arose and ran unto the tomb, and stooping and looking in, *he seeth the linen cloths* BY THEMSELVES, and he departed to his home, wondering at that which had come to pass" (xxiv, 12).

Let us be sure that we have the picture clearly in our minds. The body of Jesus

was reverently taken down from the cross by Joseph of Arimathea, helped by Nicodemus, bound in grave clothes, in the folds of which were placed no less than *a hundred pounds weight of myrrh and aloes* (John xix, 39). The grave clothes round the body would cease at the level of the armpits. The head would be separately wrapped in a different piece of cloth wound round it like a turban. Then, in Joseph's own cave-tomb, the body would be laid on one of the stone shelves, and the stone, for all the world like a huge grindstone standing upright on its rim, would be rolled in the groove made for it, so that it closed the door of the cave like an immense circular stone door which was then fixed in its place and sealed. It would not be airtight, but it would certainly prevent anyone entering or leaving the tomb.

Now no story that was "made up afterwards" would give meticulous attention to the way the grave clothes lay in the tomb when the disciples entered it on Easter morning. Let us try to imagine what

happened between Good Friday afternoon and Easter Sunday.

*Who Moved the Stone ?*

If, as Frank Morison supposes,<sup>1</sup> Jesus had a friend and follower amongst the Jewish Temple Police guard that watched the tomb—not Roman soldiers, it should be remembered (Matthew xxvii, 65)—and if Jesus appeared to him, the guardsman may have told the officer in command that he had seen Jesus outside the tomb. If so, in all probability the officer would say something like this : “ Rubbish ! How could he get out ? ” If the man persisted, the officer might well say, “ Very well, let’s roll the stone back and see.” They did so and found the grave empty. They were the first to do so. They rushed into the city and informed the authorities. The latter must have been terrified and completely nonplussed. “ Say ye ‘ His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we

<sup>1</sup> He gives good evidence for this in his book.

slept,' " said the authorities, pressing money into the hands of the guard. " If this comes to the governor's ears, we will persuade him and see that you don't get into trouble." And the rumour they started, spread. (See Matthew xxviii, 11-15.)

But how could the disciples steal the body? They were in hiding. And even if they had not been, could they have moved a heavy stone and removed a body, unwrapped it—a meaningless and delaying performance in such circumstances—folded up the grave clothes, removed all traces of a hundred pounds of spices, and moved the great stone back again without disturbing a single member of a guard posted within a few yards to watch the tomb and under the threat of heavy penalty for falling asleep on duty? No! that will not do either.

### *Evanesence*

What happened during that Saturday night? Before ever the stone had been



rolled back by the Temple Guard there can be little doubt, if we give full significance to the manner in which the grave clothes were lying, that a process took place unknown as yet to modern science, by which the physical body of Christ completely evanesced, or evaporated, or dematerialised, so that the grave clothes, weighed down by their own weight and by the hundred pounds weight of spices in their folds just collapsed. The fact that the grave clothes on the body only reached to the armpits, leaving the shoulders and neck bare, gives point to the fact, carefully noted, that the turban that was about His head was "not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself." If anyone had moved the body, this would not have been so, and why should anyone, friend or foe, who moved the body, unwrap the grave clothes and then leave them folded just like that? Those who moved the body would have taken it just as it was, wrappings and all; in the case of a friend for reasons of reverence; in the case of a thief for reasons of speed. We

cannot avoid the conclusion, if we accept the narrative at all, that it was the way the grave clothes were found lying that convinced Mark—if he was the young man in the sepulchre—Peter and John. They “saw and believed.” Moreover, the finding of the grave clothes identified the tomb as that of Jesus.

### *How Did it Happen ?*

Now, of course, that is an easy thing to say. The question is, how did it happen ? It may be that we can never know. It may be that this was a miracle never to be repeated and a miracle in the sense earlier defined, an impingement into our plane of being of energies belonging to a higher plane and beyond our present understanding. It may be that we shall one day understand as we make progress in scientific understanding of the laws of the universe, including those in the field of psychic research.

After all, there have been happenings on

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this earth which give the impression of being "once for all" miracles. The appearance of life on the planet could be instanced. Once this earth was red-hot. All its "scenery" must have appeared like that in the heart of a red fire. No one, imagined as watching the earth from outside, could have predicted that from the red-hot earth, a natural and anticipated development would be life in plant and animal. Yet it happened. However lowly its early forms, whether the amoeba in the scum of warm seas, or some other early form of life as yet unknown, the dramatic, unbelievable, unexpectable thing happened. Life began. We know not how. We may never know how. We may imagine that the play of cosmic rays produced life, but no one has repeated the experiment or proved the hypothesis, or explained why and how living things came to be.

Another instance we could take is that of self-consciousness in man. Why should the man-like ape, however advanced, ever become the ape-like man? Why should that

which knows ever cross the immense gulf between consciousness and self-consciousness, between a being which, like an animal, knows, and a being like man who knows that he knows ?

It may be that the Resurrection of Christ from the dead was a never to be repeated crossing by One person of the immense gulf between life in a physical body as we know it and life in a form which, while it can still make the same impression as a physical body on the human senses, has either (1) entirely transmuted matter by changing its form, speeding up physical changes which turn solid and liquid into gas, and then slowing those changes down again where and when its directing psyche desires, or (2)—the theory I prefer—disposing of the body-vehicle in gas, perhaps, which escaped into the air, and appearing in a spiritual or etheric form which only had the *appearance* of matter and the *appearance* of sound, reaching the brain centres of sight and sound and touch by routes other than those of the sensory nervous system. This sounds obscure,

but let me try to clarify the matter thus. The "seeing" centre in the brain is normally excited by the optic nerves carrying impulses received by the eyes, but certain drugs can also excite the "seeing" centre,<sup>1</sup> and, of course, we "see" clearly in our dreams though our eyes are shut. Similarly we "hear" through sound waves in the air transmitted by the nerves in the ears, but many unfortunate people have the auditory centre of the brain excited in ways by which they "hear" buzzing sounds independently of the ears. In other words, the sense organs are not the only ways by which the sense centres in the brain can be reached.

After all, Christ in the days of His flesh clearly had immense and unusual powers over the bodies of others. I have known personally a leper cured by modern medical methods, but it took over a year before he was entirely symptom-free. Christ cured such diseases at a touch. If He had a power

<sup>1</sup> Exciting evidence of this can be found in "Drugs and the Mind" by Robert S. de Ropp (Gollancz, 1958).

which worked speedily in regard to the material bodies of others, who can validly deny Him power over His own? Was He able, in the very act of dying, to set at work energies from the power of His own mind and spirit which accomplished the amazing metamorphosis of His body which we call the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead?

*What Happened to His Body?*

It would not be wise to suppose that Christ walked out of the tomb in the same physical body that died on the Cross, for that only postpones the question, "What then finally happened to His body?" Perhaps it completely dematerialised, that is, became nothingness, so far as matter is concerned. It is easier to suppose that through the speeding up of molecular movement, it became gaseous and escaped through the chinks in the cave, not, of course, made air-tight by the rough, circular stone, and that either (1) those particles were used by

Him to materialise again outside the tomb, or (2)—the hypothesis I prefer—that a spiritual or etheric existence, *which had the same effect on human senses as a physical one*, was the means of the post-Resurrection appearances.

—Frank W. Moyle, in his excellent book, "Our Undying Self" (Longmans Green, 1958), points out the way in which New Testament writers use two different Greek words for "see." They use "blepo" or "theoreo" for what comes through the optic nerves, and "horao" for mental insight or spiritual vision. He illustrates this from John xvi, 16 (Revised Version): "A little while and ye shall not behold (theoreo) Me, and again a little while and ye shall see (horao) Me because I go to the Father." Mr. Moyle adds, "If this had received the attention which the writer of the Fourth Gospel obviously intended it to receive, there would have been much less controversy about the nature of Christ's Resurrection. I have no doubt whatever that he intended by using the word 'behold'

(theoreo) for Jesus's physical presence and 'see' (horao) for His spiritual or resurrection presence, to rule out the idea (so deeply imbedded in the Jewish mind) of a physical or bodily resurrection."<sup>1</sup>

### *A Reasonable Simile*

Is all this wild surmising, or are there any clues to such possibilities in known scientific facts? I should like to advance a point of view which I first wrote down after discussing it with a well-known professor of physics at one of our universities.

Will you imagine, for a moment, that I am holding in my hand a lump of wax? On a cold day it is hard. On a warm day it is so malleable that I can mould it to any form I desire. If I increase the heat, I can make it first a liquid and then a gas. What have I done to it by heating it? I have increased the speed of the molecules which

<sup>1</sup> Frank W. Moyle, "Our Undying Self," p. 67 (Longmans Green, 1958).



compose it. The nature of matter is now regarded as being a form of energy, and whether matter is solid, liquid, or gas depends on the speed of the molecules which make it up.

Could the spirit of Christ act upon His body in such a way as to alter the molecular speed and make the body take gaseous form in an unusually short time? I don't know, but it is conceivable.

Imagine—what is not unknown to the physicist—fluctuations in energy so that one or more molecules acquire greater energy than the rest. If molecules at the surface of the body acquired extra energy, they could escape from the body completely. A doctor of science of London University who has specialised in physics tells me that it is conceivable that a body could evaporate molecule by molecule. If this happened, it is hard to suppose that the molecules could reassemble, and they may never have done so, but there may be a clue there which helps us as we try to understand the empty tomb.

This is not such a wild supposition as it may seem, to anyone who knows the strange laws which govern hypnotic phenomena. For example, it is a simple matter to raise a blister on a person's flesh without using any heat at all. He has only to be deeply hypnotised and told that the operator's finger is a red-hot iron, and a blister can be raised in a very short time, by touching the flesh of the "patient" merely with the cool finger of the operator. In other words, whereas most people believe that a blister can only be raised by acid or heat, it can, in fact, be raised purely by the action of mind on matter.<sup>1</sup>

If it is perfectly normal in the field of hypnotic phenomena to form a blister not by heat, but by mental activities, it is not wildly speculative to suppose that the molecular distribution of matter can be altered by influences other than that of heat, namely mental activities, and, as we have seen, to

<sup>1</sup> My own experiments in this field are described in the chapter on Hypnotism in my book, "Psychology, Religion and Healing," p. 115 ff (Hodder & Stoughton).

alter molecular distribution is to alter the form of matter. Supposing that a body which has been occupied by a spirit as powerful as that of Christ, is in a different category altogether from ours. Supposing that when such a spirit leaves the body, it increases the molecular speed of the latter in so short a time as Good Friday to Easter Sunday, and effects a change akin to evaporation by laws we do not yet understand.

It does not seem a wild guess to me to suppose that so far from there being any breach of law, Christ's spirit may have had immense power over His body, so that, after, or as, His spirit left it, the molecular energy was increased and complete evaporation or evanescence—or whatever the right word may be—took place.

This is no occasion for dogmatism. All that is being said is that we know that heat can alter the form of matter and we know that mental energy (e.g. under hypnotism) can have the same effect as heat. When we are talking about Christ, we are moving in fields which are very remote from our

understanding, but possibly, without any rupture of the reign of law, even of the laws with which we are familiar, the power of a spirit like the spirit of Christ upon the material of His body, may have been such as to change the form of the latter, and disperse it to the four winds of heaven.

### *The Avoidance of Decay*

Part of the problem is solved if you agree that He was to such a degree the master of the processes by which molecular energy can be changed that He could alter the form of the matter of His body through the influences of His mind and spirit.

Since I began to ponder these things I read Sir Oliver Lodge's great book, "My Philosophy." It was published in 1933, but I had never read it until recently. It was with something of excitement that I hit on the following passage. Speaking of Christ's Resurrection, Sir Oliver says: "Was His spirit so high that it not only animated the body, but changed it, altered

the perceptible material form, so that in a literal sense He became the first fruits of them that slept? . . . It seems to me quite possible that His case was an anticipation of what in time may happen to many, that after a long course of evolution our bodies too may become *dematerialised*, and that all the repulsive paraphernalia of burial or burning, to get rid of the unwholesome residue of de-organising or disintegrating matter that we leave behind, shall no longer be necessary. Not that our bodies will rejoin the spirit, the spirit will not need them, it will have a spiritual or etheric body of its own. Our present material bodies are formed of earthly particles, and to the earth they will always return ; but perhaps they need not always go through the processes of decomposition which to many are so repulsive. The atoms themselves may separate and so spontaneously disappear from our ken ; and the body, having served its purpose, may be not only discarded, but may cease to be. I do not know if this will ever be the fate of the higher portions of humanity.

It is a long time ahead yet anyhow, but we need not shut our eyes to the possibility. And if we find the evidence good, we may adhere to our faith that our Elder Brother had already attained this high eminence, and that the tomb could not hold the body which had been animated by so lofty a spirit.”<sup>1</sup>

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I have repeated more than once the idea that a spiritual being may have the power to produce on the human sense-centres the same result as physical matter would produce. This needs illustration, and while the records of the Society for Psychical Research can provide many illustrations, I would prefer an incident which happened to a person whom I personally knew and of whose veracity and reliability I have no fraction of doubt.<sup>2</sup>

A minister was sitting alone in his study

<sup>1</sup> Sir Oliver Lodge, “My Philosophy,” pp. 310-11 (Benn).

<sup>2</sup> I have printed this story in an earlier book, “His Life and Ours,” p. 309-11 (Hodder & Stoughton).

one stormy night, when he heard the bell ring. Going to the door, he found standing there a young woman whom he knew fairly well. She was from a village some five miles away. This village was in an adjoining circuit from which the minister in question had moved some sixteen months before. "Good evening," she cried. "I expect you have forgotten me, but I have come on a very urgent errand. My father is dying. He never attended church much, but once or twice when you were in the circuit we persuaded him to hear you preach. I *do* wish you would come and pray with him before he passes away." "I will come at once," replied the minister. Putting on his coat and hat, and taking an umbrella from the stand, he set off in the pouring rain on a five-mile walk, accompanied by the young woman.

On his arrival at the house, the wife welcomed him warmly. "Oh, how good of you to come!" she said. "But how did you know that my husband was passing away?" "Your daughter came for me,"

he replied, with some surprise at the question.

It was the woman's turn to be surprised now. "Come upstairs at once," she said, "and we will talk afterwards."

The minister went to the bedside of the dying man, spoke to him, and prayed with him, and shortly afterwards the end came. Turning to the woman, who was now a widow, he asked where the daughter was, for he had not seen her again since they entered the house. The woman replied, "I was surprised when you came to the door this evening, and I asked you who told you that my husband was dying. You said my daughter called and that you came out together. You have not heard then, that my daughter died a year ago?"

Now the minister was astounded indeed. "Dead!" he exclaimed. "She came to my door, rang the bell, and walked out here with me. But there," he said, "I think I can prove that. As we came along together, the road was up in one place and a watchman and another man were sitting in a hut in



front of a fire. They saw us go by. I'll speak to them on my way home."

He set off on his return journey, and found the two men still sitting in front of the fire. "You saw me go by an hour or so ago, didn't you?" he said to the men. "Was I alone?" "Yes, sir," one of them replied, "and you were talking away to yourself as hard as you could!"

### *Importance of Psychic Research*

Psychic research is a field which has been overrun by the fraud, the unconsciously deceived, the crank and the unreliable reporter, but I am sure we must explore it with the same exactness and integrity as we have, in the name of science, explored other fields of phenomena. Spiritualism is supposed by some to be not quite respectable, but, for myself, I feel that to deny the claim that in certain cases the living have made authentic contact with the dead is to demand more of credulity than the situation warrants. In those cases I find the Spiritualist hypo-

thesis more probable than any of its highly praised alternatives. And in the field of serious psychic research I believe careful scientific investigation will find the most rewarding treasure. Indeed, there is evidence, which I welcome, that man is getting rather tired of a barren materialism and its claim to explain all phenomena. It is almost amusing to watch the neo-physicists—whom one supposed were engrossed with matter—plunging into the non-physical for their ultimate explanations, while the neo-psychologists, whom one fondly imagined were concerned with the psyche or non-material part of man, are trying to explain his complicated behaviour in terms of purely physical mechanisms. How strange it is that man, essentially a spiritual being, should have come—as so many have—to dismiss as myths the existence of the spirits of the so-called dead, the existence of angels and devils, and, for all the difference it makes to life and thought, the existence of God Himself. How strange that man should have supposed for so long that the universe

ended at the point at which his five meagre senses were capable of registering it ! One wonders why the mind of man has developed so amazingly if, outside matter, there are no worlds for it to conquer.

### *Psychic Apport*

I have given a good deal of thought to the possibility of the empty tomb being capable of explanation along the lines of what Spiritualists call the phenomenon of apport. By this is meant the movement of a physical object from one place to another in ways quite unknown to present-day physical science, and involving passing through solid substances like walls and doors.

Not only is it claimed that inanimate objects are so moved, but human bodies also. For example, Miss Geraldine Cummins, an entirely trustworthy writer, relates the story of a Mrs. Samuel Guppy who was transported by such means from her home in Highbury to a room in Lamb's Conduit Street, London, a distance of three miles.

This case was vouched for by eleven witnesses regarded by competent investigators as reliable, and a scientist, no less than Dr. Alfred Russell Wallace, co-discoverer with Charles Darwin of the Theory of Evolution, is said to have been "profoundly impressed" by Mrs. Guppy's "apport mediumship."<sup>1</sup>

Miss Cummins also quotes from a book called "Modern Psychic Mysteries," by Mrs. Kelley Hack, an American writer, as follows :

"At the sitting of July 29th, 1928, there were ten persons present, amongst them the scientist, Professor Bozzano, and Mrs. Hack. After some psychic phenomena had taken place, there occurred what was claimed to be the dematerialisation of the medium, the Marchese. To the horror of his wife, the Marchesa, it was noted that he had disappeared from the room. The Marchese was a tall man, fully dressed. In the complete stillness that prevailed, he could not have reached the doors of the room 'without attracting the attention of all present.'

<sup>1</sup> The story of Mrs. Guppy was published in "The Spiritualist" for June 15th, 1871, and reprinted in "Light," May, 1946. I am indebted here to Miss Geraldine Cummins, author of "The Road to Immortality" and many other valuable books.

“In the early morning he was found lying asleep on a bed of hay in a small stable of the Castle.”

It would have been better if a more rigid scientific control could have been adopted in these situations, but there was no object in deluding the public, and the publication of such facts could benefit no one, least of all the person to whom it happened, the Marchese, a member of the old aristocracy of Italy.

I reject the apport theory as accounting for the empty tomb not on account of its impossibility—for to do that would not only be presumptuous, but to call a number of serious investigators liars—but because to me it does not fit the facts. Mrs. Guppy and the Marchese were immediately recognised again in the new location and were *of the same substance* as before, namely human flesh. Christ’s “body” was different, or Mary and the two going to Emmaus would surely have recognised Him instantly, which, in fact, they did not do.

Further, if the particles of His flesh were

still being used by Him in His risen body, we have only postponed a difficulty and failed to answer the question: "What *ultimately* happened to the fleshly body of Christ?" He could not take that into the post-incarnate life. Many other questions emerge. For instance, since He left His grave-clothes in the tomb, whence came the clothes in which He appeared to Mary in the Garden? For my own part, I think that in the tomb He finished finally with matter as the medium of His manifestations and used thereafter what is technically an apparitional form, a form which does not deny His real presence or fail to stimulate the brain-centres of the percipient in the same way and to the same degree as does matter.

This possibility we must now study without prejudice and with open minds. It is the question: Were the post-Resurrection appearances of Christ merely hallucinations or apparitions?

Since the study of psychical research has turned its serious attention on to both these

words, let us first remove the word "merely," for, whatever our theories about them, hallucinations and apparitions are experiences which perfectly sincere people have had.

### *Hallucination and Apparition*

Do the words "hallucination" or "apparition" lead us to any helpful view, remembering that the records of the Society for Psychical Research are filled with authentic accounts of both, but remembering also that it is hardly likely that the story of Christ fits neatly into the theories of Myers, Gurney, and later, Tyrrell, who have done such valuable work in this field? After all, we should expect One Who disposed of His physical body in an extraordinary way to have a comparable unique power in the psychic plane. Many people, at the time of their death or shortly after it, have "appeared" to their friends. Their bodies, however, have not disintegrated. I feel, and hope to show, that the word "hallu-

cination " can be excluded, but that the word " apparition " may be accepted, as long as we understand that a special type of apparition is meant and conserve the truth of the real presence of Christ in it.

After all, the faith of the Christian is in the real presence, not in the way in which that presence was mediated to men. Fundamentally, what happened to His body is no more significant for faith today than what happened to the clothes He wore at Nazareth. His proved survival of death is the vital element, although at that stage of human history men who had found a physical body would not have believed in a triumphant Christ.

### *Hallucinations*

Let us look first at the word " hallucination." I do not believe that this word can be used to explain the appearances, for several reasons.

(1) Hallucinations are experienced by individuals not by groups, let alone large



numbers. Bernadette at Lourdes experienced a hallucination of the Virgin Mary, and to use the word "hallucination" is not derogatory to her sincerity.<sup>1</sup> But the other children with her saw no one. Christ was repeatedly seen by a number of people at once. He appeared to two on the way to Emmaus (Luke xxiv, 13-35). He appeared to ten (John xx, 19-23), to eleven when Thomas had returned (John xx, 24), and as Paul says—and he was the earliest writer of all about the Resurrection—to five hundred at once (1 Corinthians xv, 6). Paul says that at the time he was writing, most of the five hundred were still alive. Psychic research has many instances of authentic hallucinations, but I have never read, even in the list of so-called "infectious hallucinations" of one which convinced five hundred people at once.

(2) Secondly, hallucinations are usually the fruit of longing, desire and expectation. Desire—as we shall see when we turn to them—sometimes occurs in apparition-

<sup>1</sup> See "Psychology, Religion and Healing," p. 154. .

appearances, but in an apparition the expectant-desire-factor on the part of the percipient is not an essential. In a hallucination it is the main causative factor.

We have only to sense the hopeless despair of the disciples on Good Friday night to rule out such a theory. The women expected to find a dead body (Mark xvi, 1, Luke xxiii, 56, xxiv, 1 and 21). The disciples refused to believe the report of the Resurrection at all (Luke xxiv, 11). The Fourth Gospel says they were unaware that the Resurrection was foretold at all (xx, 9). It was the last thing they expected, as their despair shows. Had they expected the Resurrection, they would have gathered at the tomb on Easter Day not to anoint a dead body, but to welcome a returning conqueror from the grave. Instead, they were all in hiding.

(3) Thirdly, a hallucination differs from an apparition in another important way. The latter involves a co-operation between the minds of at least two people, the agent or initiator on the one hand, and the

percipient on the other, even though it may be mental activity at unconscious levels in both cases. A hallucination does not involve mental rapport with another person. Indeed, a hallucination depends on the state of mind of the individual person who experiences it and *on that only*. A hallucination can be induced by hypnotism<sup>1</sup> and by drugs<sup>2</sup>. It is subjective.

### *Apparitions are Different*

Now let us turn to the word "apparition."

This essay cannot pretend to discuss the whole subject of apparitions. F. W. H. Myers, in his monumental book on "Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death,"<sup>3</sup> opened many doors, and the latest work of note which I have read is "Apparitions," by G. N. M. Tyrrell (Duckworth), a

<sup>1</sup> I have given instances in my own work of this. See "Psychology, Religion and Healing," p. 123.

<sup>2</sup> See "Drugs and the Mind" by Robert S. de Ropp (Gollancz, 1958).

<sup>3</sup> Published by Longmans.

former President of the Society for Psychical Research. Without going into the matter fully, we can say three important things.

(1) Technically all apparitions involve some rapport with another mind, or minds, even if the unconscious levels of those minds are alone involved.

(2) Many apparitions are "willed" or initiated by the agent upon a passive percipient.

Into this class come many of the apparitions of those who are dying. They inwardly feel, "Oh I wish so-and-so could see me or be with me at this moment," and the so-called "mid levels" of the percipient's mind, without the sense organs being involved, are so acted upon that the percipient "sees" the agent, even if the percipient is unexpectant, unwishful, or even uninterested. Here is one interesting example.

### *Illustration of an Apparition*

"Captain Eldred Bower, aged twenty-two, was shot down in his plane in France

on March 19th, 1917. The case is remarkable in that a number of 'appearances' to different people took place, three approximately at the time of death and the other two in December, 1917. The most remarkable was to his half-sister, Mrs. Dorothy Spearman, who was at the time staying in a hotel in Calcutta. She did not, of course, know of Eldred's death, or even that he was out in France again, as he had been home several months and had only returned there three weeks before he was killed. Her baby was baptised on the day of Captain Bower's death, and he was to have been the child's godfather. The following extract is from a letter to Captain Bower's mother (January, 1918) :

'Eldred was greatly on my mind when baby was born and I could only think of him. On March 19th, in the late part of the morning, I was sewing and talking to baby ; Joan was in the sitting-room and did not see anything. I had a great feeling I must turn round and did, to see Eldred ; he looked so happy and had that dear mischievous look. I was so glad to see him,

and told him I would just put baby in a safer place, then we could talk. "Fancy coming out here," I said, turning round again, and was just putting my hands out to give him a hug and a kiss, but Eldred had gone. I called and looked for him. I never saw him again. At first I thought it was simply my brain. Then I did think for a second something must have happened to him and a terrible fear came over me. Then again I thought how stupid I was, and it must be my brain playing tricks. But now I know it was Eldred, and all the time in Church at baby's christening he was there, because I felt he was, and know he was, only I could not see him. All the time I thought why do I feel like this when Eldred is safe . . . ?'

"About the time of his death a little niece of his, not quite three years old, appears to have had some visual impression of him. On the morning of his death, she came up to her mother's room about 9.15 a.m. (the latter being still in bed), and said, 'Uncle Alley Boy'—her name for her uncle—'is downstairs.' Although her mother told her he was in France, she insisted she had seen him. The third contemporary impression

was received by Mrs. Watson, an elderly friend of Captain Bower's mother, who had not written to Mrs. Bower for eighteen months but felt impelled to write a letter to her on March 19th : ' . . . Something tells me you are having great anxiety about Eldred. Will you let me know ? ' ”<sup>1</sup>

(3) But there is a third class of apparition which greatly intrigues me. It is an apparition initiated by a powerful mind, *seen by a number of people at a time, and involving the presence of the initiator.*<sup>2</sup> The latter is able to initiate an experience in the percipient or percipients by using the deeper levels of the mind to produce the same sensory results as would take place if the percipient saw, heard or touched, etc.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Proceedings of the S.P.R., Vol. 33, pp. 167 ff. (1923).

<sup>2</sup> Illustrations are given in Tyrrell's book. He collected 130 cases of such apparitions.

<sup>3</sup> I should further clarify by saying that an apparition may have factors in it which belong to a hallucination, seeing, hearing, etc., but a hallucination does not have apparitional factors in it. For instance, it is not seen by many at a time. Thus the story of the minister on p. 57 may have been apparitional, even though only one person, the minister, saw the old man's daughter. Both this story and that of the

*Did Christ adopt the Mechanism of an Apparition ?*

Now, of course, with the risen Christ in mind, and suspicious that psychical research is a phoney business anyway and unlikely to help us in such a sacred quest, many will ask this question : “ In such a situation is the agent or initiator really *there* ? ”

First let me quote Professor H. H. Price, Wykeham Professor of Logic at Oxford University, and not to be confused with the late Harry Price who has written much on Spiritualism, but whose words carry much less weight.

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Captain were stories of apparitions willed by initiators—in the first case the “ dead ” daughter and in the second the “ dead ” Captain. The experience was not expected or particularly wished for by the percipient in either case. Therefore it does not fall into the class of hallucinations. I remember at school how carefully we were told that though all greyhounds were dogs, we could not turn it round and say all dogs were greyhounds. Similarly here, all hallucinations are solitary ghostly experiences, but all solitary ghostly experiences are not hallucinations. They may be solitary apparitional experiences, i.e. induced by another mind operating on, or co-operating with, the mind of the percipient.



Professor Price says : “ Apparitions are sometimes *collective* ; that is, they are seen or heard by several percipients at the same time. The very existence of collective cases is on the face of it a grave difficulty for any telepathic theory of apparitions. Surely a telepathic hallucination ought to be a purely private phenomenon, experienced only by the person for whom the telepathic communication is intended ? But in fact it is sometimes experienced by indifferent bystanders as well. The notion of a *public* hallucination is a very strange one, almost as strange as the notion of a public dream. Shall we not have to suppose, as Myers did, that in these collective cases at any rate the apparition *is* after all a quasi-physical entity, physically present in space in the neighbourhood of the percipients ? ”

I do not understand what “ quasi-physical ” means and would question as unnecessary the presence of physical material. But we must delve a little more deeply. When we ask, “ Is so-and-so present ? ” we generally mean, “ Does he occupy space ? ”

Now clearly a spirit does not occupy space. Myers would not, I think, accept Professor Price's word "physically" in the above quotation. Tyrrell says, "Myers thought that the agent was 'metetherially,' though not physically, present in space where the apparition was seen." We want to know, then, what Myers meant by "metetherially" ! This he himself never made clear, though where an apparition was collectively seen, Myers supposed that "some conscious or semi-conscious element of the agent's personality was present." Tyrrell says, "Though he (Myers) agreed with Gurney that apparitions are not physical phenomena, he held that they do, at any rate in collective cases, in some real way, occupy space." "I hold," he says, "that when the phantasm is discerned by more than one person at once, it is actually effecting a change in that portion of space where it is perceived, although, not as a rule, in the matter which occupies that space. It is, therefore, not optically or acoustically perceived; perhaps no rays of light are

reflected, nor waves of air set in motion ; but an unknown form of supernormal perception not necessarily acting through sensory end-organs comes into play.”<sup>1</sup>

*When is a Spirit Present ?*

One thing we must try to make very clear. We are bound to use spatial terms in regard to spiritual beings, but the terms must not delude us. A story is told of a little boy who asked his mother if God were everywhere. When he received an affirmative answer, he clapped his hand over his teacup and said, “ Then I’ve got a bit of him in here.” We smile, but do we not imaginatively clap our hand over a church, or a

<sup>1</sup> Myers, “ Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death,” Vol. 2, p. 75. See Tyrrell, op. cit. p. 46–7. I find this very difficult. Myers wants two things to be true which are incompatible. If space is occupied, the senses would perceive it with the relevant organs, eyes, for instance. If supernormal perception is employed, space is not occupied. He cannot have it both ways. Tyrrell says: “ I find it impossible to separate Myers’ theory from the theory of a physical apparition and I agree with Gurney in rejecting it.” I agree also.

world, or a universe, and say, "God is *there*," when in strict reality God is not *anywhere*? "Where," "there" and "here" are spatial words and a spirit does not occupy space. We *mean*, of course, that God is everywhere available, that wherever man may be he may have communion with God, but He does not occupy space. No more does any personality after death.

### *Recapitulation*

What then can we conclude from such a study as physics and psychical research suggest?

In recapitulating, I put the matter in the form of questions because we are in a speculative field where no one can dogmatise. We are dealing with a unique occasion called the Resurrection and with a unique person, Jesus Christ.

Did our Lord, so clearly different from us in so many ways and belonging to a higher plane of being, set in motion, in the act of dying—by the power of His mind and

spirit—processes, not yet understood, which, as Sir Oliver Lodge hinted, disposed of His physical body without the dreary business of slow decay and putrefaction. Did the physical particles of that body escape through the crevices of the tomb in gaseous form ?

If so, He was thereafter free from physical imprisonment.<sup>1</sup> He was once more a Spirit. Did He, however, possess the power so to influence the deep levels of the minds of

<sup>1</sup> The references to our Lord partaking of food and speaking of His flesh and bones after the Resurrection (Luke xxiv, 39) belong, says a recent scholar, to "a cycle of unhistoric tradition. In Luke's narrative of Emmaus and in John's narrative of the breakfast on the shore of the lake, it is plainly implied that while He gave food to His disciples, Jesus Himself took none" (Luke xxiv, 30 ; John xxi, 12). Dr. David Smith comments on "the unhistorical traditions which floated about the primitive Church." He says, "St. Luke's story of the way to Emmaus (xxiv, 13-35), and St. John's narrative (xx-xxi) are the authentic and indubitable documents, and the rest of the Evangelical material, though valuable as testifying to the fact of the Resurrection, is merely a report of common talk, bristling with contradictions. Here occur all the embarrassing crudities." For myself, I shrink from the appearance of ruling out as unauthentic, evidence that does not fit neatly into a theory. Perhaps the theory needs modification !

those who loved Him as to produce in them the same effect as a physical body would produce?<sup>1</sup> Commenting on such a case Tyrrell says most importantly: "This case reveals the existence of complete machinery in the personality for producing visual imagery exactly like that of normal perception up to the range of a complete environment, and for making everything appear as natural and as fully detailed as normal sense-perception can do. For this the physical receptor-organs are not necessary." In other words, it is conceivable that the cells of the brain may be excited *by other processes* exactly in the same way as they are excited by what we call seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling. As we have seen, hypnotic experiments prove this to be possible.

Since these appearances were seen by many, may we not say that the initiator, Christ, was "there" as long as we remember

<sup>1</sup> Illustrations of those who have "heard" without the mechanism of sound-waves on the ears and who have "seen" without the mechanism of light-waves on the eyes are common in psychic literature, cf. Tyrrell, *op. cit.* p. 54 ff.

that after Christ finished with His flesh, He did not, being Spirit, occupy space ?

*Christ Everywhere—Available*

If there had been a follower of His in China, the Risen Christ could have manifested to such a one at the same time and in Chinese robes as convincingly as to Mary in the garden. He became omnipresent, everywhere available, as indeed He is today to those who seek Him.

He was as "present" to Saul on the Damascus road though unseen, as He was to Mary in the garden though she did see Him. And if when Saul encountered Him, another Christian was praying, then the risen Christ was "there" too. He was not imprisoned in a place on the Damascus road and only available there. He was no longer the Victim of space.

We *have* to use spatial terms even to describe non-spatial activities, so we may say that He Who had come "out of the everywhere into the here," had returned

from the here into the everywhere. And, since time, as well as space, have a changed significance in the sphere to which He had gone, He could thenceforth be "with" any number, at the same time.

So we can use the word "apparition" about the post-Resurrection appearances only if we use the word in the technical sense, not in the sense of being experiences without reality, and only if we regard them as being quite out of the run of ordinary apparitions, namely, special instances of our classification (3) above. An apparition is a method by which a real person, when pure spirit, may prove his presence by the excitation of the sense centres in the brains of percipients without recourse to the sensory apparatus, e.g. sound waves on the ear drum, or light waves on the retina. Such manifestations are just as real as a material presence ; to the philosopher more so.

### *Apparitions not Unreal*

Thus used, the word "apparition" is not



derogatory, nor does it connote an experience which was not a genuine experience of the presence—since a spatial word *must* be used—of a real Person. Indeed, once our Lord had finished with His earthly body, it would *only* be by means of what is *technically* an apparition that He could subsequently get through to His followers by means of their senses. We may note that the mental energy required to maintain an apparition so that it produces the same effect as would a material body, is enormous and demanding. Hence most apparitions quickly fade. Christ probably had sufficient power to maintain the apparition as long as necessary, but the apparitional apparatus is hinted at when we read, “He vanished out of their sight.” (Luke xxiv, 31.) It is only our materialism that makes us feel that a physical presence is more “real” than a spiritual presence expressed through the similitude of a physical body. “The sense data are quite real, but not physically caused.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Raynor Johnson, “The Imprisoned Splendour,” p. 206 (Hodder & Stoughton).

*No Ghost-story*

But no ordinary ghost story would have turned eleven runaways into missionaries and martyrs. The supreme evidence of the fact that Christ survived death and proved His survival to His followers is the psychological miracle in the minds of those men, hiding one day behind locked doors and the next preaching the power of the risen Christ to the people who had put Him to death. This view also clears up a point which I have never seen explained. Since the grave clothes remained in the tomb, where did Christ get the clothes in which He appeared to Mary on Easter morning? If the appearance to Mary were that of a fleshly body, it is hard to find an answer. Clearly, the answer is that if He could produce on the senses *the same effect as a physical body would produce*, He would be free to choose any effect, and that of the clothed figure would naturally be the one least likely to upset the beholder.

That he was eager to free them from

*dependence* on the senses is seen by His tender words to Mary in the garden, "Touch Me not."<sup>1</sup> He has already had to use her seeing and her hearing. He does not want her to use a third sense, touching, since He is trying to take her beyond the need of any of her senses. With Thomas He cannot achieve that. Thomas had to have—if one may so put it—all his senses about him to convince him—and it was so necessary to convince him—that Jesus said, "Reach hither thy finger and see My hands and reach hither thy hand and put it into My side, and be not faithless, but believing."<sup>2</sup>

No doubt the risen Christ could appear to us today, and claims in this direction have been put forward, but it is surely the Divine purpose that we should not normally thus be treated. A "vision" would suggest localisa-

<sup>1</sup> John xx, 11-18:

<sup>2</sup> John xx, 27. Probably Thomas did not actually do this, but if he had, then his brain-centre which registers touch would have registered the same effect as it would have registered had he touched a material body.

tion. People would flock to the place where the vision appeared as they do to Lourdes. A vision would be disturbing to the mentality of some people. They would feel it uncanny and disintegrating. A vision would suggest a less intimate communion with Christ than is in fact offered, spirit with spirit, and might even be thought to be limited to those with a special kind of psychic make-up. How misleading and tragic it would be if some western seeker, with an healthy, virile faith, discounted his experience of Christ by falsely supposing that a visionary appearance was a more authentic, or even the only authentic experience! Christ "ascended," that is, He ceased to manifest His presence through the senses, only because He had made the senses superfluous.

\* \* \*

There will be those who will criticise what has been written here about the manner of Christ's Resurrection. They will say it is too speculative, fits into no sphere of present

scientific knowledge and therefore does not explain the manner of the Resurrection.

The word " explanation " is not claimed, and, since a resurrection like Christ's has never happened before or since, it cannot obviously fall into any scientific category until we either know more science, or decide that this event belongs to another plane than any to which we are likely to have access.

The Resurrection is not self-contradictory. If it is not self-contradictory, then no one but an omniscient being can at this point in history declare it impossible.

### *The Right Emphasis*

Perhaps the last word should put the emphasis of the Resurrection where the early Church placed it. They preached it as a *message* ; as *the* message. There is not a sermon recorded in the Book of Acts which does not make it central.

What was that message ? What did it mean for the early Christians ? What does it mean for us ?

The supreme message of the Resurrection, as I see it, is a message about the power of God, and that is what the early Church took it to mean. If you turn up your New Testament, you will find that the great message of the first apostles was not a message about the early life of Jesus, the tender things He did and the wonderful things He said. It was a message about the Resurrection. I should weary you if I quoted the passages in the Acts and the Epistles in which we are told that the apostles preached Jesus and the Resurrection. "Now is Christ risen from the dead." It was a message that behind all seeming, there was a Power in whom man could put his trust which would never allow evil finally to triumph, or man finally to perish. There was a Power which proved the existence of a plane in which the so-called dead live again and a plane from which God could act.

How impossible it would be to convince a messenger from Mars on some dark winter morning that the dismal scene he saw of lashing rain, bare branches and leafless

trees, of black, frozen mud below his feet and low storm clouds above his head, would be utterly changed when the power of the Spring broke through, even though the general outline of the landscape remained the same ; that trees were poems of leafy beauty, the earth green with grass and jewelled with flowers, the sky blue and the air warm and fragrant and full of birdsong.

On the Resurrection morning there broke through the dark and dismal atmosphere in which men lived, the sunshine that betokened that a Spring of immense power and glory had come. I know how dark the days may be. Suspicion, disbelief, materialism, selfishness, the threat of war, the intransigence of nations, the power of evil—these depress us, and, more individually, there are dark days of bereavement, suffering and pain, and human nature seems as dismal as the winter weather. But in the risen Christ we have seen the glory break through, and in the Living, World-wide Church we know that the power of Love is as great as the power of Spring to banish Winter.

Frankly, I do not feel that Christ's Resurrection is evidence of our own survival of death. I am quite certain that man survives death, but it is not logical to say that because a unique Person rose from the dead, we shall do the same. His *promise* that we shall live again is better evidence of survival than His Resurrection, but His Resurrection does make us more certain than ever that there is a spiritual plane of being, and what He Himself found on Easter Day, we shall find by other routes.

Whether we understand the "how" of it or not, the Resurrection is, however, evidence of the existence of the power and resourcefulness of God. One may have in Switzerland a day as foggy as a day in London town, but if only once one glimpses the shining peaks of the former, there is a vast difference between Switzerland and London. One *knows* that the peaks, though hidden, *are there*. Behind what seems, is the Reality of Everlasting Beauty. That is what the Resurrection did for humanity. It showed men the Reality and Beauty of



Eternal Power, and they knew that darkness and sin and evil, tyranny and torture and death could never again have the last word. We may be going out into further darkness and difficulty, into cloud and storm, either for the world or in our own lives, but we must not forget that on Easter Day the immeasurable and infinite power of God broke through.

“Whatever clouds may veil the sky,  
Never is night again.”

No, never ! Clouds are things that pass. The unchanging, unquenchable Reality is Sunshine.

There broke from that garden on Easter morning the first rays of everlasting joy, and nothing, *nothing*, NOTHING can take from us the certainty that in the end that light will be in all our hearts, that joy our possession for ever.

